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DING THE TOMBS OF THE PROPHETS.

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A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN THE

BOWDOIN-SQUARE CHURCH,

BOSTON,

SABBATH EVENING, JULY 4, 1858.

BY JOHN N. MURDOCK, D.D.

BOSTON:  
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# BUILDING THE TOMBS OF THE PROPHETS.

A FOURTH OF JULY DISCOURSE.

BY JOHN N. MURDOCK, D.D.

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THIS day commemorates the epoch of our National History. It is the political birth-day of a great people. If we keep days for kings, heroes, sages and statesmen, it is proper that we should observe, in some becoming way, the anniversary of a Nation's Exodus from vassalage and dependence. Let this day be honored, by due observance, in all time to come. I have invited you to this place to-night, in deference to its claims. It is not my purpose, however, to rehearse the history of which it is the luminous centre: I propose rather to deal with the truths which it signalizes, viewing them somewhat from their point of contrast with those errors and perversions of the time, which threaten to rob the day of its only true significance. I have selected, as serving my present occasion, by affording a proper starting point for the remarks I wish to make, those words of our Lord found in Luke xi. 47, 48.

"Woe unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the Prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers, for they indeed killed them and ye build their sepulchres."

Was it wrong, then, for the Jews of Christ's day to show their reverence for the prophets whom their fathers had unjustly killed? Did they not, in the act which our Lord attributes to them, vindicate the slain prophets, and condemn the men who murdered them? Was it not praiseworthy in

that generation to erect the martyr's memorial to those servants of God whom former generations had wickedly slain? Was it not like going backward to cover the shame of the fathers with the mantle of atonement? Was it not a just and honorable sentiment which prompted them to say—"If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets?"\* How then could it be unworthy for them to build the sepulchres of the martyrs whom their fathers slew, and what is the reason of the woe denounced against them by the Son of Man?

The crime of the Jews did not consist in sympathy and veneration for the dead, but rather in hatred to the living prophets. They saw how wrong it was in their fathers to persecute and slay the prophets of old, yet they were ready to copy the very crime which they were so prompt to condemn. At that very moment they were thirsting for the blood of a greater than the greatest of the ancient prophets, and plotting to compass his death. Such is the fatal aptitude of those who are quick to detect the sin of others, in blinding themselves to their own. These men were, in reality, only perfecting their fathers' crime, and filling up the measure of that national guilt which the former but commenced. The fathers slew the servants of God, and the children perpetuated their spirit, though assuming to repudiate and condemn their deeds. This was the crime of the Jews of our Lord's time; a crime amplified and refined by the hypocrisy which informed it.

The text and the history to which it refers afford a lesson for us as a people. We condemn the Jews whom our Lord rebuked, as they condemned their fathers. We wonder at their blindness, and

\* Matt. 23: 30

execrate their insane malice towards the Son of Man. We marvel that men who lavished such costly mourning on the slain prophets of a former day, should be found cementing the monuments of the dead, with the innocent blood of the living. Yet if I do not misread the spirit of our time, and misinterpret the course of events in our country, we are not unlike them, in that we imitate what we condemn, doing the very things which we are so prompt and earnest to denounce in others. We censure the men who denied freedom of conscience to our Puritan fathers; yet all over the land we make organized attempts to punish a particular ecclesiastical connection with civil disabilities; thus restricting portions of our people in the free enjoyment of a great and indefeasible right; as if the rights of conscience were not as broad and sacred in the Catholic as in the Protestant. Thus while we glorify the Puritan's resistance of wrong, we range ourselves on the side of the Puritan's oppressor. Moreover, we execrate the acts of those rulers who goaded our revolutionary fathers to resistance; yet, either as principals or accessories, we are inflicting greater injustice on a province of our own country, seeking by the bands of power to fasten an oppressive yoke on the necks of thousands of our own brethren. We venerate the men who, in the day that tried men's souls, dared to do or die, but we denounce their living representatives. We build monuments to the dead prophets of freedom, while, by our injustice or indifference, we are adding to the immortal roll of our country's martyrs. It becomes us then, on this occasion, to inquire in what respects the text suggests parallels in the history and spirit of our country, and to find how we are to apply the lessons of warning which it presents with such solemn emphasis.

I. Consider, in the first place, how much it is

the habit of our people to condemn and malign the living, for what they admire and commend in the dead. We honor the dead prophet, while the living, who walks in the same path, and speaks from the same inspiration, is stoned. We sing the praises of the ascended Elijahs, and hoot the lingering Elishas on whose shoulders the mantles of the former have fallen. The noble men of old, who rebuked the wrong, and resisted the injustice of their time, are canonized; while those who denounce the wrong and trample on the injustice of to-day, are pelted with abuse, and smeared with obloquy. Let a man stand up in these times for those human rights which our fathers proclaimed as imprescriptible and universal, only reëchoing the words in which they asserted, and duplicating the deeds by which they vindicated them, and the magnates who wield the reins of power, and the rabble whom they hold in their leash, will cry out, with one voice, "Away with him!" He who dares, in this degenerate age, to earn the honor accorded to the patriotism of Franklin, will be very likely to be rewarded with the anathemas which have been vented against the treachery of Arnold. We embellish our public squares and monumental grounds, with statuary in honor of the sages and heroes of our earlier and better history, without any just appreciation of the spirit which animated them, or the great ends for which they struggled and bled; though, in sober sooth, the truth of nature is sometimes vindicated in spite of ourselves, in those pitiful travesties of art which fitly symbolize, not the glory of a former age, but the simulated and maudlin patriotism of the present. We rear an imperial monument in the national capital to the memory of the purest and best among the dead prophets of freedom; yet, beneath its very shadow, his living representatives may be stigmatized as incendiaries, or beaten



to the earth with ruffian rage and murderous blood-geon. If that incongruous pile should ever be completed, there would be a measure of poetic justice in the consummation; for it would signalize, not the glorious name it bears, but the distorting prejudices and belittling animosities of the age in which it was reared, and the degenerate souls of the men who conceived and executed it. It is fit that a generation which represents the principles of Washington by such deeds, should be doomed to commemorate his fame by such a monument!

For what, let me ask, do we honor the early fathers of our Republic? Is it merely for the personal qualities which they displayed; for physical endurance, or mental fortitude; for personal courage, or political sagacity? Is it not rather for those great principles of justice, equality, and freedom which they asserted with such emphasis, and vindicated with such devotedness of purpose and life? They proclaimed the natural and inalienable right of every man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They set up the privileges of the people, as above and before the prerogatives of government; declaring that the only authority of the latter, is derived from the consent of the former. When Power ignored these principles, and infringed on these rights, they resisted its aggressions. They refused to bear the burdens of a government whose policy they were denied a voice in shaping, asserting the right of immediate representation in the National Legislature. They vindicated the privileges of their citizenship, and the claims of their manhood. They submitted to obloquy and reproach, they incurred danger and braved death, to secure these rights and privileges for themselves and their posterity. These are the things which entitle them to be remembered by succeeding generations, insuring them an enduring

fame. These are the principles and deeds which our orators embalm in eloquence, and our poets commemorate in song. But how do we regard those who follow in the footsteps of these glorious men of old? There are still men in our national councils, who have not forgotten the lessons of the Fathers, who are not afraid to imitate their noble example, and who, in season, and out of season, maintain the principles which they proclaimed, and sealed with their blood. What do we say of these, our living prophets? Do we not stigmatize them as "fanatics," or brand them as "rebels?" Do we not cover them with foul epithets? Have we not attempted to awe them with menaces, or to silence them with blows? Have we not done all that supreme power, unscrupulously exercised, could effect, to stifle the voice of a part of our people, or crush them out? Have we not muzzled their presses by mob violence? Have we not battered their houses with cannon, and burned them with fire? Have we not allowed them to be hunted, as if they were wolves or beasts of prey? Have we not denied them the blessings of peace, and the fruits of industry? Have we not insisted that they shall renounce their rights as citizens, or become martyrs to them? Have we not allowed them to be arrested without accusation, dragged from their homes, and shot down in cold blood? Thus even while we magnify the merits of our dead patriots, we persecute and slay those of our own time. Thus we perpetuate and repeat the crime of the old oppressors, condemning acts in them, which we allow in ourselves, and praising those acts in the dead, for which we are willing to see the living impaled. For we must not forget that what has been done by our government, has been done by us; that we are responsible for the evil which we knew, and did not our utmost to avert. If these things have been, and our devotion

to party has blinded us as to their reality, or made us insensible of their enormity; if such crimes against freedom, and the rights of man, have been suffered to pass without rebuke, through our timidity or indifference, the stain of innocent blood is upon us, and we are covered with the stigma of an indelible disgrace. We have built the tombs of the prophets, as the continuators of the injustice which consigned them to death; not in vindication of their memories, nor out of fealty to the principles in which they lived, and for which they died.

II. I ask you to consider, in the second place, that, in spite of the avowed reverence which is so generally professed for the patriots and heroes of our earlier history, there is a very marked and wide, if not general, repudiation of the principles which they maintained, both by pen and sword, and embodied in the institutions which they have transmitted to us. Quite too many among us, separate the men from their principles, pretending to venerate the one, while they scout and discard the other. There are thousands who are loud in their eulogium of Washington, who yet ridicule those religious convictions, and look with scorn on that love of impartial freedom, and that regard for human rights, which led him to make provision for the manumission of his slaves. There are thousands who acknowledge Jefferson as the apostle of the political theories in which they have been reared, who yet scout his immortal axiom, which constitutes the only rational ground of those theories; namely, that "all men are created equal, and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." There are too many, alas! who, while they exult in the great truth of the Fatherhood of God, forget, or practically deny,

that He hath "made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Our people generally profess to glory in the doctrines, the spirit, and the deeds, of the Revolutionary Fathers; yet our government, in this very year of grace, denies the great theory, which they so broadly asserted, that it is the right of the people to elect their own representatives, set up their own constitutions, and enact their own laws. We have seen the whole patronage of our national administration, and all the appliances of a gigantic political power, exerted, both in the way of corruption and of terror, to defeat or to force the will of a free people, in respect to the fundamental law under which they are to live. The names of Washington and Jefferson are invoked to sanctify a course, and to justify a measure, from which their great souls would have shrunk with loathing and ineffable scorn. The fathers believed that human bondage was a wrong and a curse, both to the master and the slave, and they labored earnestly, and prayed fervently, for its eradication from our soil. But, while those who are more immediately involved in this terrible evil, assume to honor their memories, they do, in this most vital respect, repudiate their faith. Instead of curtailing slavery, they seek to give it wider scope. Instead of laboring for its extinction, they aim to make it perpetual. They have renounced the humane and just ideas of the men whose names and deeds they make their boast, giving themselves up to the claims of interest, or suffering themselves to be swayed by the impulse of a blind prejudice. They assume to reverence the memory of the brave men of old, who asserted the great rights of humanity, making them good against all comers; but they discard those principles of universal and impartial freedom, which those men maintained in spite of the parchments of parliaments, and the bayonets of kings.

It is a truth to which the history of this country bears abundant and mournful testimony, that our political institutions are well nigh emptied of the spirit which the fathers breathed into them; that the broad foundation of popular rights on which they reared the superstructure of our government, is well nigh destroyed; and we have stood by, tacitly consenting to the foul desecration of what was meant to be forever sacred to freedom, if, indeed, we have not held the stained garments of those who have been active in the wrong. Human liberty was the object of the fathers' devotion, but we have tamely seen her degraded and her rights repudiated. They set her in the highest niche of the temple of our republican state, but we have seen her first bound, and then cast forth into the streets. We have despised freedom, which is the chief jewel in the crown of our glory. We have discarded the seminal principle of our political and social state. We have rejected the great life elements of our democratic polity; the perfect equality of all men before the law, and the right of all men to the free use of their proper faculties, in any sphere which Providence may open to them, until they forfeit that right by crime. These doctrines of our fathers we have already repudiated in practice, and we are beginning to question them as theories. But a few months since I heard a gentleman of most amiable character, and of highly respectable attainments, then and now holding a responsible office under the national government, deprecating the humane impulses by which Mr. Jefferson's theories of government were colored, and by which his political course was so strongly influenced, though he allowed the wisdom of the great statesman in all other respects. This man does not stand alone. A greater and more eloquent man, also a native of New England, whose name has become a house-

hold word in the city of his adoption, may tell you, to-morrow, if he choose to repeat, on such an occasion, what he has deliberately said before, that the declaration of human rights, which is made the basis of the Declaration of American Independence, is only a tissue "of glittering generalities," mere rhetorical flourishes, instead of substantial and immortal truths. Thus the political disciples of the Sage of Monticello, are coming openly to repudiate his theories of freedom and human rights. They are beginning to set up the privileges of race and class, against the rights of man; thus sweeping away the grand idea of the equality of men in respect of natural rights, which constituted the basis of his political philosophy. Such views are utterly incompatible with impartial freedom, and with the principles on which our government is professedly grounded.

The fathers of the Republic were wise enough to make the Constitution under which they organized it declare the intent for which it was framed and put into operation. It expressly declares that it was "ordained to establish justice, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for themselves and their posterity." These words at least are left, and there can be no reasonable doubt as to their meaning. Yet, a few years since, I heard the foremost man of all New England declare that this government had nothing to do with the rights of men, or individual security, but was meant chiefly to facilitate the intercourse of the people, and subserve the ends of commerce. I give the substance of his remark; his words are on record, and, I believe, are to be found in his published works. Thus wealth is set up above man, and commerce is regarded as a greater interest than humanity. This is an utter reversal of the ideas of the fathers; by the very men, too, who laud their names, and assume to venerate their

memories. Nor is this new interpretation of the objects of the constitution personal or accidental merely. It has come to be an authorized construction, and an established policy; the government having actually been made to take this new direction. Not only must the most sacred privileges of one man give way to the interests of another; but conviction, conscience, sympathy and humanity must be crushed down, to smooth the way for the material interests of the country. Men talk much of their love for the Union of these States; but if you sift and carefully weigh the expressions which are so much on their lips, you shall find that this popular attachment to the Union, springs, not from love of liberty, and sentiments of human brotherhood, but from the mere love of national wealth, power, and greatness. Men love the Union because it exalts the State, and aggrandizes national importance; not because it magnifies man, and secures his rights.

The highest tribunal under our government has recently assumed grounds which subvert the great popular principles so clearly recognized in the Constitution. I do not allude now to the monstrous claim that, instead of being the safeguard of freedom, the Constitution was intended to open the way, and cover the march, of chattel slavery over our public domain; I refer rather to the formal denial of the truth, regarded by the fathers as self-evident, that all men are created equal in respect of fundamental rights. That august court, which has stood so high in the respect and veneration of our people, has solemnly proclaimed that it is not the design of our Federal Constitution to recognize the rights of man, as man; but that it was meant simply to secure the rights of the dominant race, more properly, perhaps, to fortify the privileges of a small portion of that race. This remarkable fulmination is most significant and mo-

mentous, not only striking at the hopes of the black man, but threatening the dearest rights of the white man, as well. For be it remembered, that, when humanity ceases to be sacred, and manhood cannot insure protection of person and personal rights, the real safeguard of liberty is gone, and we are exposed to whatever encroachment the interests of the dominant class, or the exigencies of party, may demand. Taking the theories put forth by our public functionaries, and the action of successive administrations, as exponents of our national policy, it would seem that nothing is regarded as sacred, except the single interest of property in human flesh. This great government puts forth all its power, increasing its police to millions, to remand one rational chattel to his chains, and the use and behoof of his master; but what has it done to repress the outrages, or punish the wholesale robberies and murders which have been practised against men whose only crime is, that they deny both the expediency and the rightfulness of human bondage? There is a fearful commentary on the spirit of a large portion of our people, (that portion of them which seems to share the chief sympathies of the national government,) in a paragraph which I read a day or two since in one of our public journals, embracing a statement of the venerable Mr. Hairgrove, formerly of Georgia, and one of the victims of the late murderous outrage of Hamilton and his party, in Kansas. Speaking of a four years' residence in Monroe county, Mississippi, Mr. Hairgrove says that, during that short period, "thirty-six murders were committed; and yet no man was ever punished for murder or manslaughter. In fact," he adds, "you may commit any crime under heaven there, without fear of punishment, except one. You may assault, stab, shoot, kill, as much as you please, without much danger; but you



must not tamper with slaves. They seldom punish anybody for crimes against a white man, but they will lynch half a dozen white men, for stealing one negro." This picture may seem over-colored, but I believe it is substantially just. It is only reasonable to expect that human life will be held cheap, where human liberty is disregarded. Where the rights of man are ignored, and property in man is the only vital thing, these things must follow, as the shadow follows its body. And the national government, both in its laws and administration, seems to have adopted substantially the same economic policy. All other interests, industry, property, liberty, even life itself, appear to be regarded as trivial, in comparison with the assumed right of man to hold property in man. I would prosecute no unreasoning crusade against those who are unfortunately involved in the evils of slavery; but when this institution is assumed as the key-stone of our government, and every other interest is construed in subordination to it, I insist that the principles of the Fathers of the Republic are abandoned, that the Constitution is perverted to uses which it never contemplated.

Thus the noble instrument which our Fathers ordained to establish justice, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to all generations, has become practically obsolete. According to the new theory of the functions of government, promulged by courts, and adopted by successive administrations, the great ends which it ostensibly proposes, are Utopian and fanatical. The theory on which the present practice proceeds, is, not that governments are instituted among men to secure the blessings of impartial freedom, but that they are designed to set up privileges, as of one class against another; to foster oligarchies, and promote the interests of the few, at the expense of the many. If these be the true ends of government,

then were our fathers mistaken in all their political and social theories. Then has it been reserved for the men of this generation to correct the errors, both of theory and administration, into which the Fathers were betrayed, in projecting and setting in motion the machinery of Government. On the other hand, if these be not the true ends of government; if the larger and more humane conceptions of the Fathers were just, we are recreant to their principles, while professing to venerate their names, and to love them for their works' sake.

The truth is, we have corrupted the noble and humane institutes of government which the fathers of the republic set up. We have perverted what they intended should enure to the benefit of the weak, to the strengthening of the strong against the weak. We have used what they fondly hoped would work out the deliverance of the oppressed, for the benefit of the oppressor. We have reversed the engine which they gave a progressive motion, with a view to the redress of wrong, and the elevation of the lowly; turning it back, with crushing power, on the very persons whom it was meant to establish in freedom, and the paths of a self-directing industry and competence. So thoroughly have we come to repudiate the principles of the men whom we pretend to venerate. We build costly sepulchres over their dead remains, but shamelessly scout their living principles. It may be said of us, as it was said of certain men of old: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are no gods? but this people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." \*

III. Consider, in the third place, how fully we have come under the law of subterfuge, and the extent to which our people have been in the habit

\* Jer. 2 : 11.

of promoting wrong, in the name of right: making abstract theories of freedom pretexts for the exercise of a real oppression. To outrage justice in the name of justice, is no novelty in the history of mankind. The Jews of our Lord's day pretended to be guided by the lights of prophecy, in their rejection and abuse of him who was the end of all prophecy. They invoked the prophets in confirmation of their falsehood, and perverted the law to sanctify their injustice; seizing the author of the law, in the name of the law. And like these Jews we are clamorous in our appeal to the Fathers, without any respect for their true meaning. We have the audacity to bring the dead to witness against the living, though both speak under the same inspiration, and proclaim the same evangel. The Jew talked of the prophets, but knew not the prophecy; so we appeal to the glorious defenders of freedom, but know not the spirit that was in them. We are consciously false and mercenary in the pleas by which we justify our public acts. We enlarge our territorial possessions, professedly to "extend the area of freedom;" but really to enlarge the field, and augment the influence of slavery. We pick a quarrel with a weak and distracted neighboring nation, who never offended us in aught that was not justified by the encroachments of our own people on her rights, under the specious plea of securing a guaranty of future peace. We bombard defenceless hamlets, jeopardizing the property and lives of unoffending people, in the interest of humanity. We encourage piratical expeditions against the territories and liberties of friendly States, under the pretense of giving them timely aid, and extending a needed protection. We open free territory to the inroads of chattel slavery, under the sanction of social and political equality. In the name of the people's

right to shape their own domestic institutions, we connive at, if we do not abet, armed incursions on the part of one people, for the avowed purpose of shaping the domestic policy of another. We tolerate mobs under the color of law, and let anarchy loose in the behoof of social order. It is appalling to contemplate the wrongs perpetrated by our people during the last fifteen years; to recount the deeds of injustice, cruelty and bloodshed which they have deliberately wrought or sanctioned; but one of the darkest features connected with these dismal transactions consists in the hollow, heartless, unmitigated hypocrisy, illustrated in the pretexts by which they have been either urged or defended. How appropriate to a case like this are the words of the prophet: "Our transgressions are multiplied, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our sins we know them; in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth has fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea truth faileth; and he that departed from evil, maketh himself a prey."\*

Speciousness and insincerity have come to be marked political vices of the time. Too many build the tombs of the prophets, not so much to honor the glorious men of old, as to secure a factitious influence for themselves. They ascend the altars of freedom for the sake of the elevation which they afford, and the light of distinction which their holy fire sheds around them; not that they may minister to those high ends for which these altars are consecrated. The highest professions of devotion to public interests, are too often

\* Isa. 59 : 12-15.

hollow and false. Many of our public men are more anxious to gain station, than to fill it well, They offer inducements for the popular suffrage, which they take little pains to justify by their subsequent acts. They are not unfrequently guilty of perversions and malfeasance which belie their pledges, and which they attempt, sometimes, to justify on grounds insulting alike to the intelligence and conscience of those whom they have deceived and betrayed. Personal interest, or party expediency, is allowed to turn them from the path of duty, leading them to the sacrifice of their professed principles. The remarkable warlike fulminations recently uttered in our national Congress, by men who should have been deterred from such contemptible clamor, not less by the reason and equity of the case, than by the convictions and interests of their constituents, may be cited as an instance in point. No one seriously believes that there was the least public necessity for such demonstrations. The inspiration of these things must be sought in party, not in patriotism. The peace of the world involves concerns too high and sacred to be recklessly jeopardized for the sake of any personal or party interests whatever; and all such movements involve the perversion of holy things, to uses base and unworthy. It is so much the custom of our public men to look one way and row another; to start false issues before the people, for the purpose of covering their real designs, that we are often compelled to look with suspicion on those whom we are really anxious to honor with our confidence. But we must be careful not to be too indiscriminate and severe in our censures on such courses. We, the people, are far from guiltless in this matter. If we encourage men to resort to tortuous courses, for the promotion of interests which we cherish, why should we be surprised to

find this tortuousness sometimes leading them athwart those interests? If we assume to bribe men to the performance of what is right, we ought to remember that there is a closer and stronger affinity between bribery and wrong. If New England will buy tariffs with manufacturing capital, why should not Presidents buy repeals of slavery restrictions, and endorsements of Lecompton Constitutions, with government patronage? The present evils of our political condition have not sprung altogether from the pursuit and compassing of wrong ends; the attempt to attain good ends by wrong means, has been quite as active in producing them. A wrong act may be reversed, and its pernicious tendencies thus be checked; but that deviousness of heart which leads to the seeking of a good end by dishonest ways, betrays a deeper and more pregnant evil. The real disease of the body politic is in that hollowness which resorts to subterfuge on the one hand, and accepts it on the other; not in the temporary misdirection of our material interests. Your public servants may commit great wrongs, like the revocation of the Missouri restriction; but such acts would be harmless if the people had the intelligence to sift, or the virtue to scout, the impudent sophistries by which they may be excused or justified. The trouble is, when the wrong is done, you have not the moral integrity to resist it. You assume to be satisfied by reasons which never, for a moment, have imposed on your judgment; while conscience has been stifled by the swelling floods of party passion, or the din of party strife. We offer a premium for craft, chicanery, and wrong in the management of our political affairs. If constituencies were less susceptible to cajolery and deception, there would be fewer betrayals of truth and justice in high stations. The people do, in reality, give shape to our

public policy; if that policy be tortuous, it is because the public heart is full of all subtlety and deceivableness.

IV. I pass now to note one more view suggested by the text; namely, that the condition involved in the charge brought by our Lord against the Jews, is one of national weakness and social decay. When communities move only by indirection, and speak only to utter guile, their dissolution must be regarded as inevitable and speedy. When the Jews had reached the pitch of hypocrisy reprovèd in the text, they were ripe for destruction. Having rejected and crucified the Son of God, though pretending to deprecate the guilt of their fathers in killing the prophets, they were given over to the sword and torch of the spoiler. The integrity of the national conscience was gone. Their social vitality, consisting of soundness of heart, had died out. False in principle, corrupt in manners, hollow in profession, and malignant in feeling, there was scarcely any thing left for them to lose. They were hopelessly corrupt; and corruption is always weakness. The life-element of their social fabric was absorbed and eaten away. They fell, not because they were weak in material power, but because they were morally perverse, and hypocritical.

In like manner, must any nation perish if it reject the seminal principles of its public polity, becoming hollow in profession, and treacherous in action. This is the lesson of history. The old republics fell, not because they were physically weak, not for lack of sages and statesmen, not because they were defective in Art, Literature, or Law; but because the people were corrupt, false, and selfish. Rome never was so great in all the elements of material grandeur and power, as at

the time when her nationality received its death blow. She was overcome, not by those northern hordes which swept, like avalanches, over her plains, but by her own intestine fraud, oppression, and luxury. Her material resources were never more abundant. Her territories teemed with men; her wealth was imperial; her skill was, at least, equal to any former period, and she was perfecting a code of laws which has ever since been regarded as the most perfect system of civil jurisprudence instituted by men. But the people had lost the ancient love of liberty. Power was used to aggrandize the state, not to protect the citizen. The spirit of the laws lived not in the hearts and consciences of the people. All orders of the state had become effeminate in spirit, pleasure-seeking and venial. The foundations of the commonwealth were undermined by domestic vice and social corruptions. Rome fell because virtue had ceased to be a quality of Romans.

The examples of History should not only instruct, they should also warn us. The processes of national growth, and the causes of national decline, are essentially the same the world over, and in all time. What has happened to a given nation, may happen to us, under like conditions. Though we have sought to assure ourselves of a happier destiny, in view of the higher intelligence of our people, the more perfect forms of our constitutions and laws, and our purer and more vital religious faith; yet if, in spite of these things, our social life is characterized by the same vices which marked these ancient states, our fate will be similar to theirs. The ground of our prosperity must be in ourselves, and not in any external advantages. We must be humane, liberty-loving, just, industrious, reasonable, fearing God and regarding man. Constitutions give no vitality to na-



tions; laws give no validity to rights. These, at the most, only crystallize the spirit and ideas of a people. Aside from their hold on the judgment and conscience of the people, they are only empty forms. The only force of law is in its embodiment of truth and right. Freedom and justice are the informing elements of all popular institutions. When these have died out of the popular heart, your constitution is worth no more than a piece of blank parchment; it becomes a husk without a kernel, a body without an animating spirit.

And here is our danger. We appeal to constitutions, instead of resting on the great and inexpressible rights of the people. As the Jews quoted the prophets against Christ, we quote the Constitution against man. We are coming to love power more than liberty. We begin to revere our sublime fathers, more for their heroic deeds, than for their just and humane principles. We exalt the qualities of courage and fortitude, overlooking the love of freedom for themselves and their posterity, which inspired them. Our love for the fathers is traditional, not vital. We seem to have forgotten that impartial freedom was the soul, alike of the deeds they wrought, the words they spoke, and the institutions they formed. Else we should not condemn the living champions of liberty. Else we should respond to every word which denounces oppression, opposes social wrong, and calls the downtrodden to freedom. If we really venerated our revolutionary heroes, for the spirit which guided them in council, and nerved them in battle; if we loved the dead prophets for the noble truths which they proclaimed, we should not only treasure their words, but listen with attention to the eloquent voices which reëcho them to our own age. But the truth is, our national life has become superfi-

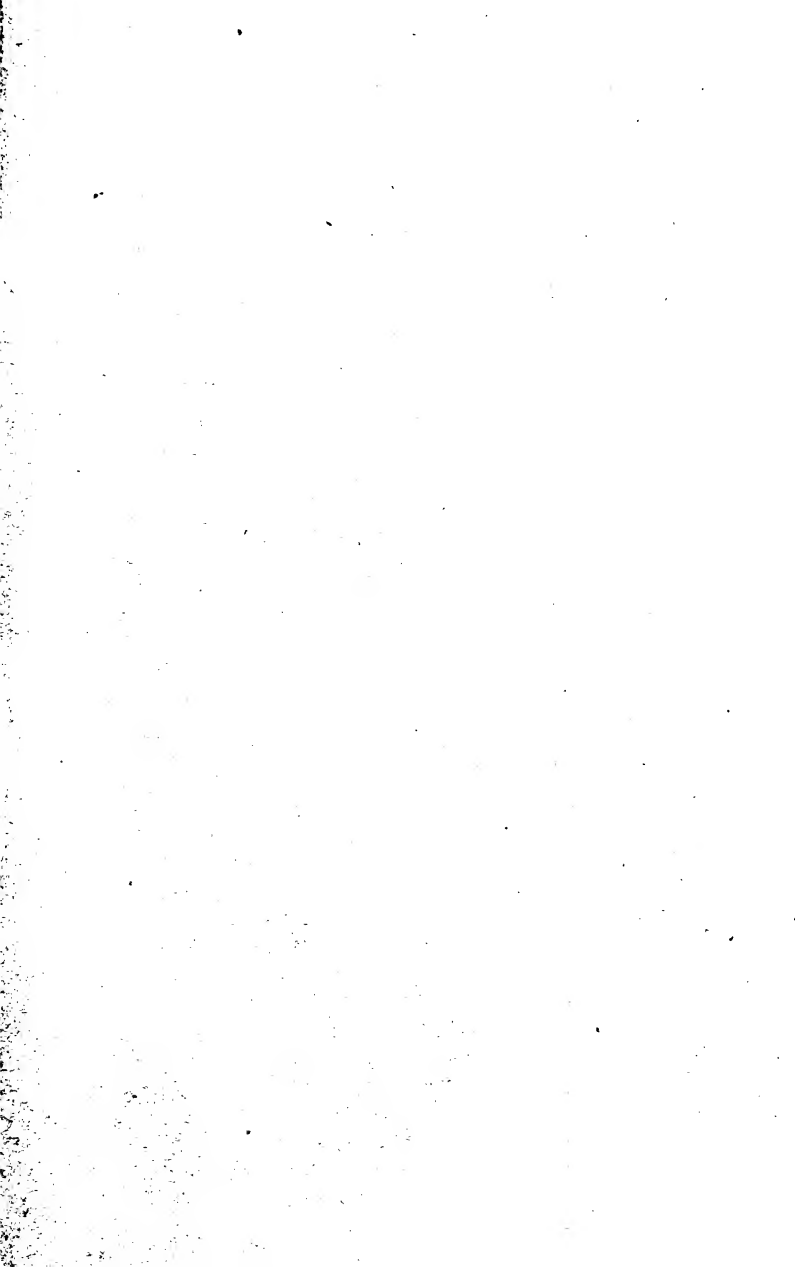
cial. Our political integrity has sadly declined. We have ceased to love liberty for its own sake. The rights of humanity are no longer sacred in our eyes. We magnify constitutions, but degrade man. We insist on the sacredness of law, but fail to maintain the inviolableness of personal freedom. We give heed to the form, overlooking the reality, forgetting that Humanity is the only substantive thing. Constitutions may crumble to dust, laws may become obsolete, and governments may sink into decay; but Humanity remains, in the integrity of its substance, and the dreadfulness of its responsibility. And shall the permanent give place to the transient and accidental? It is possible that existing institutions of government may not be ultimate and final. These may all be swept away, in some new and more glorious uprising of Humanity: but, from the social forces inhering in itself, shall spring other institutions, fresher in their life, and more glorious in their fruits.

This very day Virginia receives to its last rest, the body of James Monroe, fifth President of the United States, and fourth of her noble sons who filled that high station, having just reclaimed it from the foreign sepulchre, where it has reposed nearly thirty years. This is well. Let her gather the remains of her children to the generous soil which gave them birth. But alas for her, and for us all, if their mute ashes be all that she consent to receive! Mother of Presidents! take back to thy bosom not alone the lifeless forms of thy noble sons, but also the inspiration of their living principles, and the impulse of their heroic example. Stand up again for the truths which they asserted, and for the rights which they maintained. Garnish the tombs of your dead worthies; but be more intent to imbibe their spirit, and follow their sublime aims, which were generous as freedom, and wide as the world.

Then shall a new fruitfulness restore thy wastes, and the glories of a better age reinvest thy queenly brow. Then shalt thou be first again, in this augmenting band of states, to sound the battle charge of freedom, and first to strike that note of victory which humanity, disenthralled and crowned with the blessings of rational liberty and Christian hope, shall lift responsive to the angel song of Bethlehem — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!”

Let all the States composing this great and united America, remember that the statues of heroes and sages, and the monuments crowning our battle-fields, will become a national reproach, when the spirit which animated the Fathers of the Republic, and the principles which they staked in the revolutionary conflict, shall have been lost or denied; that the memorials of their glory will then stand only as the witnesses of our shame. Let us all remember that the fittest commemoration of their great deeds and living principles, is to make their work perpetual, through the intelligence, freedom, prosperity and virtue of the whole people. Then shall their names shine as stars in the ever-brightening firmament of a commonwealth, which shall invest the interests and destinies of a happy and hopeful race, till the clear rising of the Sun of Righteousness shall scatter all the dimness and distortions of our night, and bring in the serener glories of the Millennial Day.





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